



Devotees seeking divine blessings during Akheri Munajat on the concluding day of Biswa Ijtema yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Three-day Biswa Ijtema concludes Divine blessings sought for nation, Ummah

UNB, Tongi

The Biswa Ijtema concluded yesterday with myriad hands raised in Akheri Munajat praying for peace and wellbeing of the countrymen as well as Muslim Ummah both in this life and in the hereafter.

President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina joined hundreds of thousands of devotees from home and abroad in the final prayers, marking the end of the 3-day mammoth religious assembly.

The east bank of river Turag on the outskirts of capital Dhaka looked like a human sea as the crowds spilled over the vast surrounding areas with all roads leading to the Ijtema since morning.

In the capital proper it appeared to be a holiday yesterday as people headed towards the Akheri Munajat at the second-largest annual Muslim congregation after Hajj, in all available transport.

Eminent Islamic scholar Moulana Muhammad Zubayerul Hasan, son of late Ameer of Biswa Tablig Jamaat Moulana Enamul Hasan of Delhi, India, led the

18-minute Akheri Munajat.

The prayers in Arabic and Urdu languages started at 12:32pm and ended at 12:50 pm, amid a roar of 'ameen' in supplication to the Almighty.

A total of 3,637 foreign devotees from 64 countries attended this year's Bishwa Ijtema.

Some of the foreigners with help from local devotees will work in different parts of the country preaching Islam for some time as per provision of the congregation.

None from the war-torn Afghanistan came to the Ijtema this year for the first time due to exigencies at home.

A spot report by UNB correspondents said thousands of devotees flooded the Ijtema site since early morning yesterday and the crowds spread to adjacent areas, including a long stretch of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and Tongi-Ashulia road.

"Even people in distant places joined the Akheri Munajat as they listened to the resounding prayers over mobile phone and police radio," says one report, as the organisers estimated the total participants of the final

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## NCB MDs urge BB for strict laws to fight loan default

UNB, Dhaka

Top executives of nationalised banks and financial institutions yesterday requested the Bangladesh Bank to formulate strict laws to realise default loans from state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

"NCBs are victims of circumstances due to a big chunk of loans still unpaid by the SOEs," said the managing director of a bank at a meeting with Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed.

The governor took stock of the overall situation of default loans with managing directors of nine nationalised commercial banks and financial institutions at his office.

The SOEs share the major portion of the total default loans now standing at around 34 per cent, the meeting was told.

About appointment of private firms to help recover the overdue

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## Hasina barred from using cantt road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina was barred from using the Dhaka Cantonment road while she was on her way to participate in the Akheri Munajat of the Bishwa Ijtema yesterday.

AL sources said the motorcade of the former PM was intercepted by Military Police (MP) at Shahid Jahangir Gate of Dhaka Cantonment as it took the cantonment road to get to the Tongi Ijtema venue.

After being held back for nearly an hour by on-duty MPs, the opposi-

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## Shafiul Bashar Majibhandari passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, CTG

Hazrat Syed Shafiul Bashar Majibhandari, the pir (spiritual leader) of Fatikhahri Darbar Sharif of Majibhandari, passed away last night, at the age of 83.

The pir, who was suffering from respiratory ailments, breathed his last at the Holy Crescent Hospital at Khulshi in the city at 8.30pm.

On Sunday evening, the pir was admitted to the hospital following deterioration of the condition of his health.

Hazrat Shafiul Bashar is survived by his five daughters and five sons, including former BNP lawmaker Nazibul Bashar Majibhandari, and thousands of

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## Golam Azam to inaugurate minority convention!

UNB, Dhaka

The fourteenth national council of the Bangladesh Minority Welfare Association will be held at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium on January 31.

Architect of the four-party coalition government and veteran politi-

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The unbearable lengthiness of enemy lists

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Afsan Chowdhury

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M Abdul Hafiz

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 22		5-38 pm
Jan 23	6-42 am	

## Prayer Timings

Jan 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-40	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-40	5-45
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## 3 maj generals retired

M ANWARUL HAQ

Three major generals of Bangladesh Army were sent on compulsory retirement yesterday, sources said.

They are Major General N A Rafiqul Hossain, Major General Abu Ishaq Ibrahim and Major General Alauddin Md Abdul Wadud.

However, they will be entitled to all retirement benefits.

Services of the three generals were recently placed under the disposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Normally generals attached to the foreign ministry are considered for appointment as ambassadors.

The government decision not to appoint serving military generals as diplomats is seen as a move to maintain professionalism in foreign service, one source said.

Major General Rafiq was Director General of the Special Security Force (SSF) for long. SSF is in charge of security of the Prime

Minister and VVIPs. Later he was appointed Area Commander of Bangladesh Army in Mymensingh.

He is the first former Rakkhi Bahini officer to be promoted to the rank of Major General. Rakkhi Bahini was absorbed in the Army in 1975.

The post of DG of SSF, which was of the rank of Brigadier General earlier, was upgraded to that of Major General during Rafiq's tenure.

Major General Abu Ishaq Ibrahim was serving as Director General of Bangladesh Rifles.

Major General Alauddin Md Abdul Wadud was earlier serving as Area Commander, Comilla. He got his early training at the prestigious Sandhurst Military Academy in Britain.

The sources said that the three officers got "early promotion" to the top ranks and placed in important positions "superseding some brilliant

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## Hearing on graft cases against Altaf adjourned till Feb 28

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday adjourned the hearing on three graft cases against Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury until February 28.

Judge (in-charge) Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman Miah adjourned the hearing following a time petition by defence lawyers.

The defence lawyers submitted three separate petitions seeking adjournment of the hearing, stating that Altaf Chowdhury could not appear before the court due to preoccupations.

Earlier, the defence lawyers submitted a petition for exemption of the accused from appearance in person before the court. The court fixed the same date for hearing on the issue.

In the first case, the accused was charged with misappropriation of

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## Israeli troops take over town in West Bank

### Arafat vows to seek state at cost of his life

AP, Tulkarem (West Bank)

For the first time in 16 months of fighting, Israeli troops took over an entire Palestinian town yesterday, imposing a curfew, searching homes and arresting suspected militants in retaliation for attacks on Israeli civilians. One Palestinian was killed and eight were wounded in gun battles.

The raid of the West Bank town of Tulkarem -- the latest in a series of unprecedented reprisals for a

deadly Palestinian shooting attack on an Israeli banquet hall last week -- was a further blow to the standing of Yasser Arafat. The Palestinian leader has been unable to leave his West Bank compound since Friday, with Israeli armored vehicles parked outside.

Israeli officials said the aim of the raid was to round up militants and prevent future attacks on Israelis. Palestinian officials accused Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of trying to topple Arafat.

Reuters adds: Arafat, confined by Israel to his West Bank headquarters, said yesterday he would keep seeking a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital even if it costs him his life.

"We do not know how to retreat, we know how to advance," Arafat said in impassioned remarks to a group of Palestinian intellectuals in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

"The Palestinian state will be established with al-Quds al-Sharif

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## Bangabandhu Murder Case New date set but AL blames govt for delaying process

ZAYADUL AHSAN

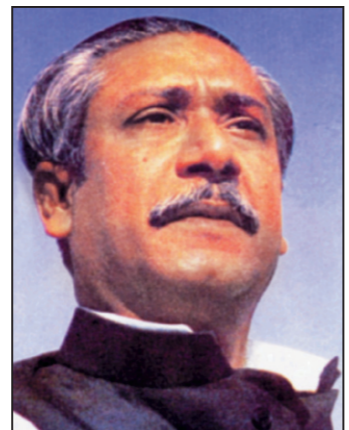
With the government decision to restructure the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, hearing of the leave petition for appeal in Bangabandhu murder case is likely to begin soon after five months.

However, while the Appellate Division has already set February 15 as the date of hearing of the leave petition -- Awami League (AL) leaders say the government could have sought an earlier schedule. They allege that the government is deliberately delaying the process.

A former government attorney expressed doubts if the present government wants to see an end to the case as convicts in the case are 'politically close' to the government, he said.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed however said, "The government is very sincere about completion of the case."

Hearing of the case remained



suspended since August last when Justice Golam Rabbani -- one of the five Appellate Division judges -- expressed his embarrassment to continue the hearing. The three-member bench hearing the case then ceased to function, as the Appellate Division could not replace Rabbani although there were two

more judges to form a new bench.

The two other judges -- Md Ruhul Amin and Md Fazlul Karim -- had previously heard the case in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court. As the Appellate Division is hearing the leave petition against the High Court Division's verdict, these two judges cannot be included in the three-member bench in this case.

However, following last week's decision to restructure the Appellate Division by increasing the number of judges to seven, it is expected that the hearing would take place on the scheduled date.

But prosecution lawyers are eagerly waiting to see who the two new judges would be.

Filed on October 2, 1996, the trial court gave its verdict on the Bangabandhu murder case on November 8, 1998. Fifteen army personnel were given death sentence. The High Court upheld capi-

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## JCD frustrated as Shibir grows stronger at DU

STAR REPORT

Fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami's student front Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) is now emerging stronger, mainly capitalising on the alliance between the BNP and its parent organisation.

Many leaders and activists of BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) are now in deep frustration over the quick rise of Shibir on the Dhaka University campus under the 'direct patronisation' of some top JCD leaders.

Ironically, the JCD was engaged in intense rivalry with the ICS, which unleashed a series of attacks on the activists of the former in different

educational institutions, particularly in Rajshahi and Chittagong universities in the 1990s. But the JCD leaders and activists now say they are left with 'no choice but to maintain a congenial relationship' with their earlier foe.

Many of the JCD activists have been rendered physically disabled by ICS activists at different educational institutions in the last few years, sources said. One of the most brutal methods of torture by the ICS is to cut tendons of the victims. But now, the JCD activists feel deeply dejected as they silently witness the ICS flexing its muscle under the protection of the Chhatra Dal.

The Awami League's student wing -- the BCL -- has so far been the

main force to resist the ICS. But with the BCL now almost a recluse following the massive defeat of the AL in the last general elections, the ICS presence on the campus now goes unchallenged.

The ICS, which now dominates the Rajshahi and Chittagong University campuses, had no open activities on the DU campus until recently.

"In fact, the ICS never dared to come out openly on the DU campus, fearing resistance particularly from the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and the left-leaning student bodies," said a top JCD leader, requesting anonymity.

On many occasions, ICS workers

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## First ODI at Ctg today

HASAN MASOOD, from Chittagong

Bangladesh will go into the first match of the Coca-Cola one-day series against Pakistan at the MA Aziz Stadium today without their only consistent batsman Habibur Bashar.

The right-hander has been ruled out of the three-match series with a broken left thumb that he sustained during the Chittagong Test. The injury to Bashar, who has been advised to take a three-week's rest, served a major blow to the home side's morale, already at a very low with the whitewash in the Test series.

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